**Media Relations & Measurement Virtual Conference**

**May 14-15, 2020**

**Executive Summary**

**The Future of The PR Pro: Media Relations and Measured Communications Through COVID-19**

*By Tamra Johnson, APCIA; Shomari Stone, NBC News4 Washington; Maureen Vogel, National Safety Council*

**What do the news and media relations landscapes look like now?**

**Shomari:**

* We’re practicing safety first—social distancing, etc.
* NBCUniversal is heightening safety protocols and measures

**Maureen:**

* Scaled down media relations efforts, but started to amp up social media messaging around safety
* Wanted to make sure they had the right data and information first, so they didn’t have to backtrack with misinformation

**Tamra:**

* Also wanted to tell positive stories from the industry—how insurers are helping members of the community.
* It’s especially important, because it’s hard to humanize business!

**Shomari:**

We get hundreds of emails a day from PR agencys, pros and companies, looking for our attention.

**How to stand out to reporters:**

* State the facts.
* Keep it simple.
* Explain what the story is and how it’s going to affect the viewer.
* Remember, most coverage is still about COVID-19.
* When presenting ideas, keep social media in mind (hashtags and incorporating social media platform) – because viewers are getting information from all sources.

Think about **retailoring and sharing content and stories** with your pitches and media relations efforts the same way you tailor your content—you might share a video later online, after a headline goes out or a short broadcast with an interview with a community member or expert.

**Maureen:**

* Paused organic and paid social media campaigns in the first weeks after COVID-19. You need to be careful with your messaging.
* “The name of the game in PR is making sure you’re not tone deaf.”
* “You want to be part of the national narrative to lift people up.” You don’t want to risk offending.

**Shomari:**

Make sure your lighting is good, especially if you’re offering an at-home video interview (like via Zoom). Also, hold your video horizontally, if filming from a cell phone.

More reporter interaction guidance:

* Make social media a part of your strategy.
* But, when trying to reach a reporter, don't be a robot. Make sure you're conversational.
* It’s OK to show emotion and your feelings, too. Don’t come across as robotic or inauthentic.
* Keep press releases, pitches and emails short and simple: KISS.
* Cover the who, what, where, when and why (and what’s in it for me). Include numbers, follow-up times, etc.
* Make sure you’re available when you say you are! Reporters are moving fast, so you need to give them all that information up front and then follow up and follow through.

**Maureen:**

To get media placements:

* Check your messages constantly.
* Look for ways you can fit in.
* Don’t shoehorn yourself in places you don’t belong.
* It’s not a good time to experiment and risk things.
* Introduce yourself to reporters and offer yourself and your experts as resources to them, outside of pitching.
* Don’t ignore local and trade publications, either. Those are crucial now during the crisis.

**Tamra:**

To get media placements, pt. 2:

* What you tried weeks ago might not work currently.
* Be willing to pivot your stories and adjust your efforts as COVID-19 continues.
* Stay aware of trends and coverage.
* Be willing to address different angles and topics.

**Shomari:**

When pitching stories, remember:

**Ask how you can make the stories impactful, memorable, and emotional.** You’re competing with a lot of distractions, so you have to balance ways to grabbing attention and making them pause, despite making dinner, feeling depressed, etc.

**Beyond ROI: Assessing and Adjusting Your Communications Impact**

*By Emily Kostic and Patty Goldman, Ad Council*

Reporting your efforts can:

* Increase accountability
* Increase funding (if you’re a nonprofit—for corporations and agencies, it can increase your budgets and wins)
* Strengthen your stewardship and responsibilities

To align your metrics to business objectives, you build a funnel with business goals, then marketing objectives, then KPIs/metrics

Make sure your **goals are specific and realistic**, and have timing attached to them as well as making sure your key players are bought into this framework.

Ask yourself:

* What metrics am I currently using?
* What metrics do I need to highlight and reach the business goals?

Make sure your metrics are “bucketed out” across formats—print, TV, digital, social, tech and customer. Map out the customer journey across these verticals, as well.

Many times, you’ll have to partner with an outside expert or source to get all the metrics you need. **Ask these questions to select the right partner**:

* How is data collected?
* Is it easily exportable?
* How user friendly is the platform and interface? (Really important if you want colleagues to use it)
* Is historical data available?
* How does the pricing work?
* Can I add custom metrics?
* What support do they provide? (You want to aim for a long-term relationship.)

**To select the right metrics and framework, ask yourself**:

* What really matters to you and your team?
* What data do you have now that’s actionable? Where are you excelling?
* What are the metrics (and/or actions) you’re prioritizing?
* What does your leadership care about the most?
* What metrics do you have available now? What can you put number to already?
* Where are there holes in your customers’ journeys? What are your options to fill these holes?

**Map this out visually** to create your ideal measurement and evaluation framework, where you can clearly see the customer journey as well as what you have—and what you lack.

For Ad Council, they prioritized the following metrics—which focused on the customer journey (how the potential interacted with Ad Council, so they could assess how they can best interface with them and get more success)

* The number of major owned events
* Number of unique organizations present
* Number of conference presentations to our target audience
* Number of press hits and total impressions for earned brand content
* Year-over-year follower growth on LinkedIn
* Average open rate of our board emails
* Average monthly sessions at AdCouncil.org

**It’s crucial to have your communications, analytics, and evaluation teams in lock step**.

Evaluation reminders:

* “The first pancake is always a flop.”
* Evaluating is an iterative process.
* It’s OK if the first time isn’t a slam dunk.
* Continue refining and honing your efforts.

**Inside Reporters’ Minds: How COVID-19 Has Changed News Media Coverage**

*By Greg Galant, Muck Rack; Amir Bibawy, Marketplace; and Alexandra Wilson, Forbes*

At *Forbes* and *Marketplace*, their coverage mainly focuses on COVID-19—and stories have to at least have a mention of it, to not seem tone-deaf.

**Alexandra:**

Readers want feel-good stories, so CSR and community efforts, etc. are welcome

**Amir:**

“There’s an appetite to look away from the pandemic.”

Find ways to tie your pitches to the crisis, but with different angles—money, WFH, organizational changes, etc.

**All:**

Remember that many journalists’ roles have been repurposed during the crisis, so they might be covering a different beat or pivoting to cover more than one aspect

**Rules to follow:**

* A lot of times, there’s an email message—then a LinkedIn message—then a Twitter message. It can be too many messages and too much follow up.
* Target your reporter. Know who you’re sending your pitch to before you hit “send” or pick up the phone.
* Ask yourself if the journalist you’re reaching out to will actually be interested in your story.
* Don’t waste your time pitching to reporters who don’t fit the angle!
* Don’t send mass pitches, either—some journalists won’t even respond to it.
* Don’t follow up repeatedly, hoping that will change journalists’ minds.

If you **build a rapport and relationship beforehand**, that can shoot your email to the top of the list in a full inbox. By building that relationship, giving a quick heads up that something is coming their way—or even seeing your name in their inbox—can encourage them to open your emails.

**Follow up with reporters after.** Tell them about the results you received because of the story (a donation that worked, community that was helped, clients that loved it, etc.) Share the stories on social media. Thank them for their work.

It can be refreshing for reporters to hear from people who aren’t pitching them! Continue building the relationships.

**Measuring the ‘New Normal’: Integrating PESO and the Barcelona Principles**

*By Katie Delahaye Paine, Paine Publishing; Johna Burke, AMEC; and Barrie Rosen, Consumer Reports*

**Katie:**

Consistency and research is key.

* Continue to check in with your audience over time to see how they’re feeling as time passes, especially during the current crisis
* Doing so can help you figure out if they’re sick of your messages and you need to pivot, etc.
* Do you need to adjust your priorities? These are things that can be measured, but often require pulse surveys.

There is a “fear of finding out” – FOFO – but you have to put that aside and measure. You need to lean on data and science to fix and improve your efforts.

To measure, you need to understand your role in the path of value.

* How are YOU providing the bottom-line boost?
* How will you do this?
* Measure based on campaigns and/or priority.

**Johna:**

Do the PLAY model:

* Problem: What is the current situation and why? What needs to change? What are your comms goals?
* Look: Who are your audience and how do they behave?
* Ask: How will you earn attention? What influences your audience? What content will resonate?
* You’ll know you’ve done it when: What does success look like? What are your goals?

**Measurement rules to follow**:

* AVEs are NOT the value of communications.
* Make sure there are insights that matter on every report—and the measurements are consistent and relevant.
* Some vanity metrics are OK, but save the focus of your metrics to your objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, out-takes and outcomes.
* Make sure you measure your metrics against your actions, campaigns and outputs (which will adjust) .
* Don’t bury the unsavory or negative metrics, but provide them all in context and pivot where necessary.

To dig into the meaningful metrics to you and your organization, dig into the conversations and what’s going on around you.

* What concerns, questions or complaints are coming through your customer service team?
* What are sales and social media posts telling you?
* How are employees responding?

If you’re trying to show you how you’re saving money—or how you want to save money and bring bigger bang for the buck—and don’t have a scientist, turn to your finance department! They will loan you someone to help you map that data and help you come up with a formula that works for evaluation and campaign shifts, etc. **Make the business case, and they’ll support you.**

When looking for metrics for your storytelling efforts, look for your calls to action. What difference are you making? How are you noticing this? Rely on those and go from there.

**The Future of the News & Social Media Landscape: Breaking Through the Noise to Reach Your Audience (Even in a Crisis)**

*By Derek Hubbard, Southwest Airlines*

**Storytelling**

Great storytelling is creating and capturing moments that matter. Storytelling is at the heart of how we can connect with our audiences through social and digital media.

**What makes great story?**

* They are honest and rooted in a level of truth.
* They are human – rooted in human experience.
* Heart – every great story has to have heart, passion and fire that drives it.

**Transactional, Operational and Reputational**

* The three categories in how Southwest approaches social content. Each has its own impact and each are equally important.

It doesn’t take a lot to find stories that are honest, human and have heart. You must be engaged and listen to your audience.

**Six comms goals** with customers and employees:

* **Honest** – Tell the truth
* **Transparent** – Linked to honest but your messages cannot be viewed as not telling the whole story.
* **Quick** – Have to balance speed and accuracy
* **Genuine** – Important to know that what we are sharing is genuine
* **Progressive** – Be ahead of the curve, especially in technology
* **Omni channel** – can’t be afraid to put crisis messages across your various channels

**Remember the individual!**

* Every channel is a customer service channel in a crisis.
* **Always create for the masses but solve for the individual.**
* Find ways to create content that will help the most people, but laser focused on the individual.

It is important to stay close to sources of truth in a crisis and adapt to what audiences want you to provide.

**Communication, Communication, Communication:** However you can get in touch with your people is best.

**Pitching During COVID-19: How to Break Through the Noise of the ‘New Normal’**

*By Sarah Evans, Sevans Strategy and Digital PR; Hugo Rojo, CBS News; Amanda Ponzar, Community Health Charities*

**Sarah:**

Become emotionally mindful (check out the Emotional Mindfulness Compass [here](https://bit.ly/prdailymedia))

**Be mindful and human.** This will help you in relating to both journalists and your other stakeholders.

How is PESO changings?

During COVID-19, strategies and elements are overlapping and some are just thrown out the window.

**Hugo:**

* How can we extend the reach of the interviews they’re giving?
* When you communicate about communications, this can be a little different – but purpose is still key
* Doubling down on what makes the show different (“Face the Nation” on CBS News)—reaffirm your key propositions, remind them why it matters, and reinforce with your content, etc.

**Amanda:**

* From the nonprofit side (and “far less sexy,”) it’s all about the tools and resources they had to offer
* The first thing they did (Community Health Charities) was to gather resources, tools, etc. and then she positioned the organization as the expert and resource to lead the way

**Example of getting press:**

* They pivoted a previous partnership/marketing campaign with a local pizza chain as a CSR effort
* By not canceling the event, they had an opportunity to provide “giving back” and a feel-good story—where she got coverage
* Think about the angle. Instead of hitting the “stop” button, ask how you can slightly pivot to fit the situation
* How can you position the effort in a way that fits the crisis or current situation the best? Pitch THAT to journalists, too.

**Hugo:**

* Now more than ever, people need trusted sources of information
* As communicators, we have to ask ourselves how we can amplify these experts and leaders, so we can fight against misinformation and help spread news
* During COVID-19, this includes sharing messages to #StayAtHome and more
* Also asked what “Face the Nation’s” role in covering the pandemic?
* Don’t thump your chest on your accomplishments, but rather, keep doing what you do best and highlight how you’re helping people and are offering important resources, information, advice, etc.
* This might also look like new content and different formats, like newsletters, Zoom interviews, tweets, etc.
* Think about where your audiences are now and how you can meet them where they are (especially now, as they move more digitally)

**Sarah:**

* Be mindful of the impact COVID-19 has had on journalists
* Ask journalists what they’re working on and how you can help
* They’re overwhelmed, so it’s all about being a resource and supporting them

**Hugo:**

**Go back to the basis.**

* Remind yourselves what they are—relationships, etc. and then do it.
* Instead of pitching, pick up the phone to connect. Ask them how they’re feeling, what they’re seeing, etc.
* Build those relationships.

**Amanda:**

* People are becoming their own new sources, with owned content and the paid opportunities across publications
* As long as the news is accurate and you’re making sure you’re not misrepresenting or misinforming, use all the channels of PESO—don’t think paying for coverage necessarily negates your message.
* Use as many partners and as many channels as you can to get your message out there.

**Hugo:**

If you have a relationship with a reporter, use that relationship. Lean on that, to stand out and get your angle through—and attention above all the noise and stories and pitches

**Sarah and Amanda:**

Watch the individual broadcasters and journalists—on Twitter, on livestreams, etc. Many are adjusting and adapting and reaching out with Zoom chats, LinkedIn/Facebook Live, etc. – and they are telling viewers what they want! Listen to them and deliver on their requests.

**Hugo:**

* Adjust your PR plans and be willing to scale them down, adjust to them virtually, etc.
* Reimagine what you already have. You don’t have to reinvent the wheel, but you should take a step back and reimagine how you can pivot
  + For example: SXSW canceled their event, but they put their films on Amazon Video
* PR pros, remember that you have the stuff you need! You have organizations and products and services that are great! Work with that and adjust.
* You have to be OK to say, “This PR plan isn’t going to be the same.”

**Amanda:**

* Customize your pitches. “It’s worked for me before, and it’s working for me now.”
* Don’t mass blast journalists.

**Hugo:**

* **Take time to listen**—to yourself, the needs of your organization, and your audiences.
* Many organizations are looking for new ways to do business, so we might need to find new ways to communicate.
* **“We have to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.”**
* Rely on your team, be willing to change, listen to yourself, and be open to new ways of communicating.

**Reaching the New Consumer Audience: Effectively Relay Brand News, Content and Information that Matters**

*By Jorge Peschiera, formerly Netflix’s “Patriot Act with Hasan Minhaj;” Jeff Rubenstein, Xbox at Microsoft; and Adam Ilenich, Twitter*

**Jorge Peschiera** –

* You have to really know who your brand is and who you are not.
* You have to think about your audience’s identity.
  + The audience is trying to shape their own identity and are shaping themselves off the brands they follow.
  + More than we look at generations, we look at identities that span the generational divide.
  + If you understand your core, you will understand how they interact with your brand.

**Jeff Rubenstein** –

* People are looking for an escape, they are looking for something to bond over.
* People are turning to gaming because it can foster the unity and fun that might be missing during this pandemic. Gaming is across all different demographics!
* It is important to be authentic and not a try-hard.
* Listening, being humble and understanding the needs of your audience will serve you well.

**Adam Llenich** –

Getting culture means getting on platforms that make sense.

Four main parts of brands communicating on Twitter:

* Educate and inform people about the virus and to help stop the spread of the virus. Connecting people while they are apart.
* Helping through donations services and other offers.
* Provide levity and other entertainment.

As tech gets smarter, people have the opportunity to level up their social listening. **One of the fundamental things that needs to happen before social listening is just listening.**

* Do the research.
* See how people are speaking to each other and how conversation varies by platform.
* Take a beat to listen, research and see how people are talking.

There is a push to be more human, more than ever. Brands need to show up in a way where they are hyper aware of people’s struggles.

**Handling Media Requests Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond**

*By Nick Lanyi, Ragan Consulting Group*

Approach crisis communications with a “**360 Approach**”:

* There’s no such thing as an internal message.
* Your internal message is going to go external, because everyone is interacting with everyone else.
* Instead of making your messages different, tailor it to the audience (employee memo vs. pitch), but *the story is the same*.

For **COVID-19 messaging**, make sure your messages follow the “Three Cs”:

* **Coordination**: Follow health and government experts/organizations
* **Clarity**: You don’t want any ambiguity or confusion with what you’re saying. Make sure you’re communicating very clearly what’s going on (with reopening and beyond)
* **Compassion**: Put people first—your consumers, employees, etc. All of your messages should convey empathy

**Crisis response time** (to answer reporters and beyond) comes in hours and minutes, not weeks and days, so:

* Try to get your messages and responses approved with regulatory, executives, legal, etc. AHEAD of time. This is why a crisis plan is so important!
* Make your case with these stakeholders why you want to use specific language or answer things in a certain way—and work with them to anticipate problems ahead

**With your media relations response:**

* Provide a placeholder statement while you figure out your actual response (“We’re aware of this…we’ll provide info as soon as possible.”
* Calmly and straightforwardly correct mistakes or rumors as you need to
* Convey compassion during your response and with your words and tone

**For media responses:**

* Be responsive
* Get ahead of the narrative—if you don’t tell your story, someone else will
* Reporters need you now, more than ever! Work with them and it’ll make crisis response potentially easier
* Think ahead
* Ignore fringe outlets that aren’t acting in good faith – be selective IF it fits your strategy, too
* Sow seeds for recovery

**Help by using events and channels creatively:**

* Daily updates and briefings
* Use your owned platforms (newsroom, blog) and social media with your own storytelling
* Put your executives and experts out there to make connections with audience members
* Reach out to reporters with whom you have relationships, so you can get a more fair and balanced piece of coverage

**Avoid:**

* **Lying** – the truth will always come out
* **Silence** – you want to be responsive, from the first few hours all the way through. Don’t stay silent for a long time, or rumors can fly. Instead, engage with stakeholders.
* **Confusion** – You don’t want it to seem that the right hand doesn’t know what the left is doing. State your messages clearly and get things right!
* **Defensiveness** – Get the facts straight and establish your narrative, but don’t be emotional.
* **Combativeness**
* **Ignorance**
* **Mixed Messages** – State your key messages and keep coming back from them
* **Acting Contrary to Values** – If you’re saying or acting differently than your values, you can quickly wipe away all your branding efforts. Don’t destroy your work!

Once the record is corrected and you establish your narrative, shift the conversation to better ground, including your values and your people (both employees and consumers)

**Recovery reminders:**

* Stakeholders will understand mistakes if you take responsibility, explain and fix the issue(s)
* Keep promises and continually inform/engage with stakeholders
* Use your progress to reinforce the narrative you’re telling about your organization
* Use the news timeline to your advantage to further your message and road to recovery
* Even past the crisis, don’t bury the past or try to pretend the crisis didn’t happen